



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 16, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

The Committee on Homeland Security (Committee) is investigating the Department of Homeland Security's (Department) failure to effectively operate and maintain remote video surveillance systems, and the potential inappropriate employment of non-U.S. citizens to service sensitive border security equipment. The Biden-Harris administration's disastrous management of the border has resulted in more than 8.3 million encounters at the Southwest border, more than 10.3 million nationwide encounters, and approximately two million known gotaways who have escaped into the United States.¹ Resource constraints and the poor border security policy choices made by the Biden-Harris administration are exacerbating the devastating effects of the surge of illegal immigration and weakening U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) ability to maintain situational awareness of the border. Surveillance tools, such as remote video towers, are a force multiplier which enables "Border Patrol to survey large areas without having to commit hundreds of agents in vehicles to perform the same function, thus improving the safety of agents as they detect, identify, and classify incursions at the border"²

Disturbingly, multiple sources revealed to the Committee last week that more than 66 percent of the cameras in the remote video surveillance systems upgrade (RVSS-U) program are inoperable. According to these sources, some of the busiest Southwest border sectors have nearly 50 or more cameras offline with multiple towers that have been out of service for more than a year. Committee sources also divulged that the Federal Aviation Administration, the vendor responsible for the repair of these cameras, contracts to companies employing non-U.S. citizens who may be physically manipulating the equipment on the camera towers. Employment of such individuals appears to violate the CBP's Information Systems Security Policies and Procedures Handbook, which states that "CBP policy requires that only Government and contractor

¹ Nationwide Encounters, U.S. Customs & Border Protection, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>; H. Comm. on Homeland Sec., September 2024 Border Report, at 38, U.S. House of Rep., <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/September-2024-Border-Report.pdf>.

² U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., Remote Video Surveillance System Upgrade Program: Independent Verification and Validation, <https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/mgmt/itpa-cbp-rvss2012.pdf>.

personnel who are U.S. citizens shall be granted access to CBP systems processing sensitive information.”³

On Monday, a news outlet reported that “nearly one-third of the cameras in the Border Patrol’s primary surveillance system along the southern U.S. border are not working”⁴ While the statistics referenced in the news article vary from those provided by the Committee’s sources, the severity of the Department’s failure to properly operate and maintain its tools designed to secure our Nation’s borders is nonetheless disconcerting.

To assist the Committee with its investigation of the Department’s operation and maintenance of remote video surveillance systems, please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 23, 2024:

1. The Integrated Fixed Towers (IFT) and Remote Video Surveillance System-Upgrade (RVSS-U) Daily Availability Reports for February 1, 2021, May 1, 2023, and October 15, 2024;
2. Availability reports from May 1, 2023 to October 10, 2024, depicted in graph form;
3. A document sufficient to provide descriptions of the criteria used to designate a priority one, two, and three ticket referenced in the Daily Availability Reports;
4. A document sufficient to list all contractor companies or subcontractor companies used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to provide services under Interagency Agreement (IAA) number HSBP1014X00155;
5. A full and unredacted copy of the IAA number HSBP1014X00155 between CBP and FAA Logistics Center;
6. Documents sufficient to show the breakdown of the funds that have been obligated, awarded, and spent, to provide services for IAA number HSBP1014X00155;
7. All Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) joint intake center e-mails referring or relating to IAA HSBP1014X00155; and

³ CBP Handbook 1400-05D ver. 7.0, Information Systems Security Policies and Procedures Handbook, Section 4.1.1. Citizenship, Personnel Screening, and Position Categorization. The CBP Comm’r or designee may, however, grant access to CBP systems for non-U.S. citizens under certain exceptions if the individual is a legal permanent resident of the United States or a citizen of Ireland, Israel, the Republic of the Philippines, or any nation on the Allied Nations List, who has a satisfactorily completed the necessary background check because there is a compelling reason to employ the individual instead of a U.S. citizen, and the Dep’t’s Chief Sec. Officer and Chief Information Officer concur in approving access for the individual.

⁴ Julia Ainsley, 30% of Cameras in Border Patrol’s Main Surveillance System Are Broken, Memo Says, NBC News (Oct. 14, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/investigations/30-cameras-border-patrols-main-surveillance-system-are-broken-memo-say-rcna175281>.

Secretary Mayorkas

October 16, 2024

Page 3

8. All documents and communications, including but not limited to, e-mail, internal memoranda, and guidance, referring or relating to security concerns due to the lack of vetting or background investigations for contractors or subcontractors performing services on border security technologies from May 1, 2023 to present.

An attachment contains instructions for responding to this request. Please contact the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

Per Rule X of the U.S House of Representatives, the Committee on Homeland Security is the principal committee of jurisdiction for overall homeland security policy, and has special oversight functions of “all Government activities relating to homeland security, including the interaction of all departments and agencies with the Department of Homeland Security.”

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



MARK E. GREEN, M.D.
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



CLAY HIGGINS
Chairman
Subcommittee on Border Security
and Enforcement



DAN BISHOP
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight,
Investigations, and Accountability

Encl.

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

Secretary Mayorkas

October 16, 2024

Page 4

The Honorable Lou Correa, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement

The Honorable Glenn Ivey, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Accountability